

Unless H.R. 3915 is signed by the President soon, the 504 program will shut down on Monday.

The ranking minority member and I have been working together on finding a solution to the 7(a) problem. Due to a variety of reasons, unfortunately, that solution is not part of this legislation. I pledge to the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) that I will do everything in my power to see to a resolution in the 7(a) problem as soon as possible.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 3915.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great reluctance that I agree to the second short extension of the Small Business Administration. We are here today because this body has not been able to get our job done. All we ever hear from this administration and the majority party is how important small businesses are, but when we have a chance to do something as simple as ensuring small business of the capital they need to survive, no one from the other sides of the aisle is willing to step up to the plate.

The administration's lack of commitment in supporting reauthorizing the Small Business Administration clearly demonstrates a disconnect between what they say and what they are willing to do. The administration has no problem depriving thousands of small businesses of the only affordable lending opportunities open to them. They are unconcerned that their decision to cut the 7(a) program jeopardizes over one-third of all 7(a) loans.

This administration could not care less that thousands of small businesses that were guaranteed loans by Small Business Administration had their loans stripped out from under them and may now face bankruptcy. It does not seem to bother them one bit that they are driving lenders out of the 7(a) program, leaving even more small companies with no resources to build their businesses. You would think that job creation might get President Bush's attention, but his administration is denying small businesses access to \$3 billion in loans this year alone, which will result in 90,000 lost jobs.

The administration and the Republican leadership may be perfectly comfortable slamming the door shut on small businesses struggling to compete in the weak economy, but I am not. The 7(a) program has been on life support since January. The Small Business Administration flagship lending program was first shut down in early 2004 due to lack of funds. Small business owners, some who have put down their life savings, some who had plans to expand and hire new employees, some who were going to purchase new equipment found themselves left in the lurch. Even though they had played by

the rules, submitted their applications on time and were approved for a loan, the Federal Government failed to honor its commitment to them.

Both fairness and accountability flew out the window when the program was shut down and applications were returned to small business borrowers.

Still today these small businesses are waiting for some relief. When it was reopened, the program saw new restrictions that are still in place. In its current state, the 7(a) program fails to serve the very small businesses Congress had in mind when it created this program in the first place. They are causality of this administration's lack of commitment to small businesses. And that is just plain wrong. We must address this crisis immediately.

Our small businesses do not ask for much. Yet, they give so much in return. They create jobs in our local community. They pave the way for individuals to reach the American dream. They train our workers and generate new ideas. We should be given back giving back to them what they have given to us. And what does this bill give them? It gives them nothing. Now more than ever, our Nation needs small companies to succeed. They are the driving force of job creation in our economy. America's hard-working small businesses should be able to count on Congress to improve the Small Business Administration and its critical programs. Unfortunately, we are failing.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield to the chairman of the committee for the purpose of entering into a colloquy.

Would the chairman be willing to assure me that he will work to make changes to the 7(a) lending program by April 2, 2004?

Mr. MANZULLO. Mr. Speaker, will the gentlewoman yield?

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. I yield to the gentleman from Illinois.

Mr. MANZULLO. I thank the ranking member. I will be willing to enter into a colloquy.

I will assure the ranking member that I will work with her to make changes to the 7(a) lending program by April 2, 2004 that will resolve the problems currently affecting the 7(a) program through the end of fiscal year 2004. I make the sincerest assurance that these negotiations will involve all relevant parties, including House leadership and the White House and that the gentlewoman and her staff will be involved in such negotiations. I truly believe that we can solve this problem together.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. I thank the chairman. I appreciate his willing to willingness to work this issue out in a timely manner. However, given past experiences with the gentleman and our so-called agreements, I am sure you can understand my need to make this agreement abundantly clear with the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, small businesses continue to suffer under the current 7(a)

program restrictions, and we cannot continue to ignore this issue. It is the most pressing issue that the gentleman have jurisdiction over. I thank the Chairman.

Mr. MANZULLO. I would like to thank the ranking member from New York for entering into this colloquy and resolving this issue amicably.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MANZULLO. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GERLACH). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. MANZULLO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3915, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: "To provide for an additional temporary extension of programs under the Small Business Act and the Small Business Investment Act of 1958 through April 2, 2004, and for other purposes."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

APPOINTMENT AS MEMBER TO NATIONAL PRISON RAPE REDUCTION COMMISSION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 7(b)(1) of the Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003 (42 U.S.C. 15606), and the order of the House of December 8, 2003, the Chair announces the Speaker's appointment of the following member on the part of the House to the National Prison Rape Reduction Commission:

Mr. Pat Nolan, Leesburg, Virginia

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. UDALL of New Mexico addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CAMP) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. CAMP addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BOYD) is recognized for 5 minutes.